



taste buds

chef Larry Janes



## Create sweet fantasy

A wedding cake should be a creation of dreams, a delicious fantasy to sweeten the event and delight the memory. Good, talented cooks can trust their memories and sweet fantasies to a professional baker, or they themselves can create a wedding cake of their dreams? If you don't already own, or can beg, borrow or steal a few of the professional cake bakers' gizmos, creating a dream of sponge cake, pearl frosting and fresh flowers can be an enjoyable, fulfilling and inexpensive undertaking. First off, and probably the most important, you must have a plan or direction for making and assembling the cake.

HOW MANY GUESTS will the cake serve? Is the choice of batter and frosting conducive to the climate? Will the cake be layered or presented in tiers? Can the cake be transported and assembled at the reception?

Think of all the "what ifs" including weather, time frame, construction, transportation, serving, decorating, presentation and taste.

Cake bakers and professional decorators rely on a bevy of support personnel here in the metropolitan area. Of course, there is the venerable Kathleen Glamor in Redford, West Bloomfield and Rochester. When it comes to cakes, if they don't have it, you don't need it.

Another local favorite that has a growing reputation is the Bakers Acre at 5637 Middlebelt in Garden City. Husband/wife Jim and Linda Pratt have owned the notable cake supply establishment for almost eight years and have watched it grow from a wedding cake house to one of the most reputable supply establishments for cakes in the area.

Linda Pratt, a professional cake baker herself, offers these little known tips for a successful cake: First timers should begin by preparing cakes as simple as possible. Regardless of how simple or elaborate the cake will be, it must be level or the cake itself will look crooked, no matter how it is decorated. Use a sharp knife or fine string to lop off those "bulges" every-one experiences on the top of the cake.

SECONDLY, WHEN the cake is removed from the cake pans after baking, place the layers immediately on cardboard sheets or cake racks and place them individually in plastic garbage bags. Pratt added, "This will not only keep the layers incredibly moist with lesser crumbs for longer periods but will allow the preparer an opportunity to clean up the area before decorating begins."

Budding cake decorators can also take advantage of the many cake decorating videos that are available to rent or purchase. Many highly touted equipment manufacturers such as Wilton have cake-making videos for the beginner, intermediate and professional baker with state-of-the-art and up-to-the-minute tips and techniques for making the perfect wedding cake.

As far as supplies are concerned, most wedding-cake-type pans can be rented. You will also need a good-quality, heavy-duty mixer, no-ting spatula with a long, straight edge, cardboard circular or rectangular cake boards, pastry bags and assorted tips.

Most professional use disposable parchment paper bags but yours truly finds it just as easy to purchase the disposable plastic decorator bags. They are more durable and, with the use of a couple

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## Artistry in wedding cakes

### Baker's works unique

By Ariane Funke  
special writer

THEY'RE ALMOST too pretty to eat, those elaborate wedding cakes created by Kevin Paulina of Northville. "All my cakes are one-of-a-kind," said Paulina, who holds an associate's degree in culinary arts from Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. "The style of the wedding is very much part of the cake."

Paulina, 26, is winning raves and loyal clients who want an intricately decorated and tasty cake for that most special occasion — a wedding.

The cakes, which may cost hundreds of dollars, are filled with fruit and rich chocolate and decorated with delicate roses, lacy fronds of icing and fat cupid. All the decorations are made from sugar, egg whites and other edible materials.

ONE OF HIS cakes was on display at Tiffany's in Chicago. Another is slated to appear in a color spread in Bride's magazine.

One satisfied customer is Marilyn Schakne of Bloomfield Hills, who considers Paulina's wedding cakes "stunning and beyond delicious."

"He is beyond anybody who is baking a cake," said Schakne, who hired Paulina to prepare two similarly lavish cakes when her two daughters married within six months of each other last year.

"He is an artist," she said. "Everyone commented on how beautiful the cakes were. And they were delicious."

Making fancy cakes is only one of Paulina's interests. He also is a consultant and food stylist who creates attractive displays of food so they will photograph well.

BECAUSE THE elaborate cakes are so time-consuming, Paulina usually accepts only one assignment per week. The cakes cost between \$2.50 to \$10 per slice, depending on the work involved.

Although some cakes have cost more than \$2,000, "I really try to work around my client's budget," Paulina said. "There is no typical price. There are so many variables."

Paulina, who grew up in Highland, near Milford, has long been interested in the culinary arts. As a young boy he helped his mother bake gingerbread houses for other family members.

Paulina worked for a time as day chef at Machus Red Fox restaurant in Bloomfield Township and was pastry chef at the Country Epicure restaurant in Novi. He decided to specialize in pastries and desserts because "I like

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JIM JAGOFFELDO/artist photographer

Kevin Paulina's elaborate wedding cakes range in price from a few hundred dollars to more than \$2,000. Generally, the cakes are from \$2.50-\$10 per slice. "The inside should be the most

important," said Paulina, who believes a cake should taste as fabulous as it looks.

## Specialty is torte cakes

By Ariane Funke  
special writer

Dan Miller uses Belgian chocolate for his mousse cake fillings and fresh frozen whole strawberries for his Bavarian cream.

Miller, a baker, specializes in torte wedding cakes using fine ingredients. The name of his shop, Elite Sweets, expresses his philosophy.

"We sell taste," said 25-year-old Miller, a Westland resident. "Once people taste it, they want it. You use a superior product that you're proud to serve to your guests."

Miller, a graduate of Livonia Franklin High School and Schoolcraft College's culinary arts program, opened Elite Sweets last October. The shop, which sells a variety of cakes and sweets, is on the south side of Eight Mile Road, west of Farmington Road, in Livonia.

ELITE SWEETS sells 24 variations of torte cake, with sumptuous fillings of chocolate mousse, strawberry Bavarian cream and fancy liqueur flavors.

According to Miller, there are many definitions of the term torte cake. Generally the cake is rich and multi-layered and may contain large quantities of nuts and eggs. At Elite Sweets, a torte cake is made with yellow or chocolate chiffon cake, split and layered four times with a variety of creams and fresh fruits.

Each tier of a wedding cake may be different.

"A chiffon cake has egg whites whipped into it," explained Miller. "It's higher, more airy. It's a moist, very light cake. It's more time-consuming to make chiffon, but it's a better product."

Miller's flair for fine desserts blossomed when he enrolled in Rich-



JIM JAGOFFELDO/artist photographer

Dan Miller (left) of Westland and partner Rob Cortis of Farmington Hills feature 24 variations of torte cake, including torte wedding cakes, at their shop, Elite Sweets in Livonia.

and Teeple's commercial foods G.M. Paris Bakery in Livonia. "YOU CAN FLOW with it, any idea that comes with a cake," Miller said. "There are 100 ways you can

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## Don't let cake flop

Do your cakes tend to be dry? How about lopsided? Does the cake crumble when you try to frost it?

Nobody wants to put time, effort and expense into baking a cake, only to have it flop. Most cookbooks offer tips on successful preparation, baking and frosting. Here are a few of them:

- Follow the recipe and measure ingredients carefully. Too much shortening, sugar or baking powder may cause cake to fall, to run over top of pan or to crumble. Too much flour or too little liquid may ruin the cake's shape or make it tough and dry.

- Professional bakers generally recommend that ingredients be at room temperature. Eggs will beat to a greater volume when at room temperature, but cold eggs will separate more easily.

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